



Buzzwords ...

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..... the newsletter for National Beekeepers' Association members

Conference Special Issue ... Buzzwords No 44 August 1992

- * **MARKETING LEVY OK'D**
- * **AFB CONTRACT APPROVED**
- * **MANUKA CLINICAL TRIALS**
- * **1080 ACTION ANNOUNCED**



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The 1992 NBA Conference is now behind us, and what a conference it's been. Your association has taken a number of important decisions and I look forward to a positive approach from our industry in the coming year.

The marketing levy adopted by conference will I am sure give new heart to the honey production part of our industry. Honey is not just a breakfast spread and I have no doubt the marketing programme will improve the sales of our most important product.

MP Jeff Whittaker gave us some encouragement in our campaign to stop the import of Australian honey. Our belief is that undeclared, unheated Australian honey poses a significant risk to our industry. Your executive will do everything in its power to see that our politicians are made aware of that fact.

We can also take pride in the research work being carried out for our industry, which makes such a positive contribution to all beekeeping. In particular I would like to mention Dr. Peter Molan's considerable work on manuka honey. Clinical trials are ready to begin, subject to the availability of Honey Industry Trust funds.

And speaking of trust funds, I am sure beekeepers were pleased to see all the trustees attending conference. These people are responsible for the care of funds which are vital to the future development of our industry.

Many members were rightly concerned at the small amount of time allocated for the 33 remits at conference. The fact that we managed to discuss all remits and still make major decisions on marketing and disease control says a lot for the professional approach taken by conference delegates. I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone at conference for helping our association achieve so much in such a short period of time.

Dudley Ward, president

“THE MOST POSITIVE IN YEARS”

Only a few weeks ago, beekeepers around the country were predicting that this year's conference would be one of the least productive ever. After all, there were 33 remits, several rule changes, and a 21 point proposal to restructure the association. There was also a long-standing and contentious proposal to fund the disease control programme and imports of Australian honey were looming on the horizon. The industry itself was faced with another big honey crop and retail prices were beginning to soften. With all that to be discussed in little more than one and a half days of scheduled conference debate, even people from outside the industry could have been excused for suggesting that the Hastings conference would be little more than a flop.

As it turned out, such predictions couldn't have been further from the truth. The seminar was one of the most informative and timely in recent years, with excellent presentations on bee breeding, marketing, AFB testing, and the antibiotic properties of honey. Conference itself worked its way through all the remits, and the debate was for the most part reasoned and constructive. Another unanimous call was made for executive to set in place an effective (10% of apiaries) AFB inspection programme using the services of MAF. And against all odds, delegates also voted unanimously to fund a \$150,000 per year marketing programme for New Zealand honey.

The New Zealand beekeeping industry has had its share of trials and tribulations in recent years, much of it brought on by changes in government policy. We have lost tax payer support of our endemic disease control programme while at the same time being denied an equitable funding system using the government's own Commodity Levies Act. CER marches on, undeterred by the fact that beekeepers on both sides of the Tasman don't want to see the opening up of the honey trade. And the failure of the Animal Health Board to incorporate oxalic acid into 1080 possum baits means government funds continue to be used to poison our bees. But in the face of all this, our industry has decided at this conference to take a more positive control of its own affairs. The road ahead may continue to be rough, but if we now get behind our association with our financial, as well as our moral support, we can say in the future that beekeepers will at least be in the driver's seat.

MARKETING LEVY GETS NOD

It shouldn't be any surprise to readers of *Buzzwords* that your executive has been contemplating for some time the need for a marketing programme for New Zealand honey. Following the presentation by Bill Floyd at last year's Blenheim conference, a honey promotions fund was established with donations from beekeepers and industry suppliers. The fund was used to finance the highly successful manuka honey publicity.

The long-established Marketing Committee also formed a focus group to work directly with Bill Floyd to determine a cost-effective marketing programme for our industry. As we mentioned in *Buzzwords 41*, the programme incorporates

the excellent work being carried out at Waikato University on the medicinal uses of honey, and also concentrates on the use of honey as an ingredient in the food manufacturing industry. The idea is to increase honey consumption in areas outside the traditional use of honey as a table spread.

Bill Floyd gave several presentations at conference, and in particular was asked by executive to speak on Remit 5, the remit supporting funding proposals for a marketing programme. As Bill sees it, with the problems now facing our industry (and in particular the likelihood of imports of Australian honey), we can either look to the government for protection (a highly unlikely prospect!), or look at our market, find the opportunities that exist, and realise that although the free market is here, it doesn't necessarily have to lead to market collapse.

The problem, according to Bill, is that honey is a very unsophisticated product, almost the same today as it was when it was first used as a food. While all around us food products are being created at a truly phenomenal rate, honey struggles to keep up with the competition.

But all is not lost, because as Bill says, "the essence of good marketing is to turn faults into features." What honey has got going for it, first and foremost, is that it is a pure and natural food, unadulterated by chemicals and industrial processes. And New Zealand honeys have several distinct advantages in this regard. In the 1990's, according to market analysts, the trend will be towards "functional foods"; that is, foods which provide a positive, health-giving affect to the consumer. Such foods are already making news in Japan, and have a big future around the world. The unique medicinal properties of native honeys such as manuka, kanuka, and rewarewa make them ideal candidates for incorporation into functional foods.

We also have the opportunity to capitalise on the developments being made in honey marketing in the U.S. There the Honey Board has increased honey consumption by 10% by concentrating on the food service (restaurants, etc.) and food ingredient industries. Here again the "pure and natural" image of honey has a great appeal. By incorporating honey into their products, the manufactured food giants can help to counteract the growing negative perception of their processed foods. The Americans have licensed a honey logo for use on such products, and now find that manufacturers are actually willing to pay a fee for its inclusion on their product packaging.

Bill Floyd presented a draft programme for honey marketing in New Zealand, at a cost of \$150,000 per year. The plan is based on the "absorption" of an additional 1500 tonnes of New Zealand honey on the local and overseas market, with increases in prices for some honeys, and an overall increase in demand for others. For this year the programme will include the design and licensing of a product logo, a folder to hold promotional material, research into public perception of honey, general advertising and publicity, and a major (2 days per week) effort by Floyd Marketing on behalf of the industry. His work will involve publicity, product development, market research, and developing and implementing the marketing plan. The programme will be for a one year contract with supervision by the Marketing Committee.



The power of the adult bee test, according to Mark, is that it gives us a chance to use a tool in our war with AFB which is more cost-effective and efficient than simply carrying out inspections alone. For the same cost, samples can be analyzed from a larger number of New Zealand's hives than are inspected currently. The tests can then be used to more effectively target follow-up visual inspections by inspectors and diseaseathon teams. Beekeepers could also use the tests to determine "at risk" hives early in the season. If the hives are then quarantined, there is much less chance of transferring undetected infections during normal beekeeping management.

A manual and lab course teaching the adult bee test has been developed jointly between Dr. Goodwin and Cliff Van Eaton, MAF Quality Management, Tauranga. The course has been given a test run with two branches and a number of conference delegates were keen to ensure that their branches had a chance to take the course before the beginning of this season. All branch secretaries should soon receive a letter from Mark and Cliff giving their branch members the opportunity to book in for the course.

In case you're wondering, MAF Quality Management's official policy is that only colonies showing clinical (visual) signs of American foulbrood will be considered to be infected for the purposes of the Apiaries Act, 1969. Colonies **will not** be ordered to be destroyed based on a positive adult bee test.

BEEKEEPER MP SAYS WE'RE RIGHT

Our association has been fortunate in recent years to be addressed by leading members of the government cabinet. And while their attendance hasn't usually translated into supportive government action for our industry, we can at least say that we've been able to make our views heard.

This year's conference was to be addressed by Mr. Denis Marshall, Associate Minister of Agriculture, and the cabinet member directly involved in the on-again, off-again negotiations over disease control funding and the Commodity Levies Act. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Marshall contracted an ear infection in Australia (*I told you Bondi was polluted* - ed.) and was unable to fly home to make his speech. His place was taken by Mr. Jeff Whittaker, local government MP, and a man not unfamiliar with the beekeeping industry.

Mr. Whittaker, it turns out, was for many years a hobbyist and then part-time commercial beekeeper in Hawkes Bay. For over ten years he owned 100 hives and dabbled in queen rearing, pollen production, and export marketing of comb honey. He was even asked to be an observer for Percy Berry in 1978 when Arataki shipped barrels of crushed ling heather honey comb overseas. So with a history like that, there was no point trying to say that this politician was out of touch!

Watched over carefully by the Minister's secretary, Mr. Whittaker began his talk following along closely the notes prepared for Mr. Marshall. Yes, the government was going

ahead with Australian honey imports, because "we can't have quarantines which are really trade barriers." And no, the government wouldn't pay loss-of-earnings compensation to beekeepers caught up in the Nelson EFB scare, because there was no statutory provision and "the government couldn't be seen to set a precedent when every two weeks or so there's a suspect case of animal disease investigated somewhere in New Zealand."

The notes also included some interesting, if unintentionally embarrassing, comments about how many of our industry's problems (AFB control programmes, Commodity Levy, export certification) are inter-related. What was obvious, but not stated, was that they were all problems caused, rather than solved, by government.

The fun began, however, during question time. With the speech notes put away, Mr. Whittaker was able to speak more as the fairly independent National Party MP that he really is. First he was asked, in light of the Minister of Agriculture's decision not to allow an NBA levy using the Commodity Levies Act (unless, of course, we get a 75% response rate from a ballot and a 60% majority of ballot recipients in favour of the levy), whether the government would be applying those same requirements in deciding whether to collect its own income tax!

That question brought the house down, and with the mood definitely lighter, someone asked Mr. Whittaker what his opinion was concerning honey imports from Australia. According to Mr. Whittaker, "I personally don't think that honey with the potential of spreading disease should be allowed into New Zealand. The question is, can the minister be convinced?" He suggested that the decision wasn't yet set in concrete and that if the industry was serious about its disease concerns then it should provide every member of Parliament with the factual information necessary to force a change. The same thing should be done with the oxalic acid in 1080 issue, since it was obvious that parliamentarians didn't know that the issue was of concern.

These comments were a bit of a revelation to many in the audience, and especially to your executive. They have been lobbying hard on both issues, but in this case with the Associate Minister. But before readers begin to imagine that Mr. Whittaker's comments mark some great shift in government policy relating to beekeeping, think again. Remember, Mr. Whittaker is a back-bencher, and we all know how much influence back-benchers have.

HEARD AT CONFERENCE (II)

"The old boy network in MAF doesn't work any more because most of the old boys aren't there any more."

"My business is not in trouble because I was on executive. There must be some other reason!"

"I'm going to speak against your remit, but not in a nasty way."

"Where's Gisborne?" - the question that plagued Steve Olds of TecPak Plastics all during conference. It seems he



FROM THE MARKETING COMMITTEE

The Marketing Committee is pleased to announce one of the most positive decisions in the history of the New Zealand beekeeping industry. At the 1992 Hastings Conference, branch delegates voted 13-0 to "give (conference's) full support to the efforts of the Marketing Committee, and support the funding proposal of 50 cents per hive increase on the 1993 hive levy recommended by the Executive, to be reviewed in 12 months time."

The Marketing Committee looked at various ways of raising funds for the marketing of New Zealand honey. Our conclusion was that the easiest, fairest, and cheapest way was to use the hive levy system already in place. The 50 cent increase on the levy is based on a cost-effective budget determined by the committee. To determine whether this levy was in line with other marketing levies overseas, we decided to calculate the levy on a per kg figure based on the average New Zealand honey crop of 29 kg per hive. The 50 cent levy corresponds to 1.8 cents per kg, substantially less than either the American (4.3 cent) or Australian (3.8 cent) honey industry levies. We believe the New Zealand programme represents excellent value for money.

The 50 cent levy will establish a marketing fund which will be used to put into affect the marketing programme Bill Floyd presented at conference. The Marketing Committee looks forward to implementing this programme on behalf of the industry.

Sue Jenkins, Marketing Committee

AFB CONTRACT APPROVED

With a resounding (13-0) 'yes' to the Bay of Plenty's remit on industry funding for disease control, and the defeat of Auckland's remit on branch organisation of disease inspections, conference once again gave executive a clear mandate to set in place an effective AFB control programme for this coming season. The decision comes just in time, because according to Murray Reid, MAF's National Manager (Apiculture), the reduction in inspection last year (from 9.4% of apiaries to 3%) led to the detection of only 336 AFB hives. Since the average over the previous four years of fuller inspection was approximately 1000 per year, Murray speculates that there could be as many as 600 more, **undetected** AFB hives spread throughout New Zealand this year.

Executive members met throughout conference to discuss the \$120,000 proposal and the contract with MAF Quality Management is now in its final negotiation stage. Since the industry's current target is 10% of the nation's 25,000 apiaries inspected each year, the contract to inspect 1050 apiaries will mean that MAF personnel will be responsible for 42% of the total. Branches, through diseaseathons, will be responsible for the other 58% (1450 apiaries). The contract also specifies a range of other MAF services which will be performed, including supervision of temporary inspectors, diseaseathon services, disease control education, and beekeeper counselling. The contract will be funded by a 41 cent per hive increase on the 1993 hive levy.

Executive will also be drawing up a plan for future disease control services, based on submissions to the position paper prepared by Executive Officer Ted Roberts which was circulated to all levy payers in April. The plan will likely include provisions for the use of the more cost-effective adult bee AFB test developed by Dr. Mark Goodwin and his team at Ruakura. The plan will form the basis for subsequent contracts with MAF Quality Management after the 1992/93 production year.

HEARD AT CONFERENCE

"There must be a limit to how much you can increase queen weights; otherwise we'll produce queens the size of rats." (From the audience) "Oh well, there goes the bee space!"

"I'd suggest through the president that you tell the meeting what you're telling the meeting."

"If you're sitting on the fence you have to be careful what type of fence you're sitting on."

"Mr. President, can I say any more? Mind you, I don't think I know any more."

AFB TEST MAY REDUCE COSTS

We mentioned in *Buzzwords* 43 that a lab course will soon be offered around the country showing beekeepers how they can carry out AFB tests on adult bees. The test is a major breakthrough in AFB control because it allows beekeepers for the first time to detect potential AFB infections in their hives **before** there are any visual signs of the disease.

Dr. Mark Goodwin, who has used the test extensively, gave an excellent presentation on his work at conference. Mark and his team tested samples of bees for the presence of AFB spores from a number of sources, including hives from hobbyist and commercial beekeepers, feral hives, and retail honey packs. Interestingly, retail packs taken at random from supermarket shelves had the highest rate of positive spore tests, at 25%. This would tend to indicate, according to Mark, that in at least some cases honey is being extracted from AFB colonies before they are destroyed. Hobbyist hives were second highest at 11%, while feral colonies, often blamed for AFB outbreaks, were the lowest at 6%. The positive testing feral colonies also had the lowest levels of spores of the four groups.

Mark is quick to point out, however, that the high rate of positive spore tests doesn't necessarily mean that beekeepers are simply failing to find all those brown, ropy objects in their hives. To date, inspections have revealed visual signs of the disease in only 26% of the hives testing positive for *B. larvae* spores. The possible reasons for this discrepancy are many, according to Mark, and include drifting bees, hygienic behaviour, and perhaps even a physiological resistance in some bee stocks. There is no doubt that nurse bees can detect AFB infected larvae before they show any visual signs of the disease, and they can clean out infected cells so well that over 80% of the cells will rear healthy brood in the next brood cycle.



must have slept through the school geography lesson long ago where he would have learned the fundamental difference between flying to Gisborne and flying to Hastings for the 1992 NBA conference.

"There's a lot of meat in these remits." (From the audience)
"And a fair amount of grizzle, too!"

MANUKA CLINICAL TRIALS SOON

Another very interesting presentation at this year's conference seminar was made by Dr. Peter Molan of Waikato University. All our readers probably already know about Dr. Molan and his team and the fantastic work they are doing investigating the antibiotic properties of manuka and other honeys (see *Buzzwords* 38). The seminar gave Dr. Molan the opportunity to summarize both his work and the substantial scientific literature on the medicinal properties of honey.

Honey has long been used as a wound dressing, and according to Dr. Molan, it is probably the perfect substance for such a use. Not only is it antibiotic (killing almost all bacteria), it also keeps the wound from dehydrating. Almost all other wound dressings either keep the wound dry (avoiding infection, but leading to scarring), or moist (avoiding the severe effects of dehydration, but making a great medium for bacteria to grow).

Honey is also better than man-made antibiotics because such antibiotics actually slow down the rate of cell growth. The moisture-attracting nature of honey, on the other hand, actually pulls body fluids and nutrients to the wound surface where they help speed skin growth and healing.

According to Dr. Molan, honey has got everything going for it except the acceptance of the medical fraternity. But the recent discoveries about a second antibiotic substance in manuka may help to change all that.

All honey gives off hydrogen peroxide, a known antibiotic. The hydrogen peroxide is produced when the glucose in honey reacts with oxygen. The problem with hydrogen peroxide as an antibiotic, however, is that in large concentrations it breaks down in the presence of a common enzyme (catalase), producing the characteristic fizz we see when we put it on a cut. Honey, because it produces hydrogen peroxide slowly, at a low level, doesn't lose its effectiveness. Provided honey is kept away from light, the enzyme which breaks down the hydrogen peroxide won't even activate.

Dr. Molan and his students tested the hydrogen peroxide in honey on a range of bacteria and as a control removed the hydrogen peroxide with catalase. That's when they discovered the second antibacterial property in manuka. While not present in all samples of manuka, some samples showed a high level of non-peroxide inhibition over a whole range of bacteria, even at honey dilutions of as low as 1.8%.

The exciting thing about the manuka discovery is that this non-peroxide antibiotic substance works against even highly resistant bacteria such as the MSRA bacteria which is

gaining a reputation for closing down hospital wards. According to Dr. Molan, doctors may soon be looking back at the last 20 years as the golden age of antibiotics. In the near future we may have a host of bacteria resistant to synthetic antibiotics, and the need for naturally occurring antibiotics like the one found in bioactive manuka will be all that more important.

Manuka has been shown to be effective against *Helicobacter pylori*, which is now thought to be the major cause of stomach ulcers. And this is where the honey is finally to be tested in a clinical trial. A large number of patients will be given 1 tablespoon of bioactive manuka or another honey before meal times, five times a day. The patients will then be examined for the reduction in *H. pylori* bacteria. The trials are set to begin around New Zealand once the Otago University Hospital ethics committee approves the trial. The trial will hopefully be funded by a grant from the Honey Industry Trust Fund.

BUGLOSS SAMPLES SOUGHT

Dr. Molan mentioned that the one honey other than manuka that might have the non-peroxide bioactive ingredient is vipers bugloss, also known blue borage (*Echium vulgare*). The plant grows in many parts of the country, and is an important honey producer in parts of Central Otago and the MacKenzie Country.

The only problem is that Dr. Molan has only ever tested one sample (it was positive), and despite all his efforts has been unable to get any more. Now there's bound to be more samples of borage honey kicking around the South Island, especially after this year's big honey crop, so if you can supply Dr. Molan with a sample, please help him out. Send a 50 gm sample, together with as much information as possible on where the honey was produced, to Dr. Peter Molan, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, HAMILTON, ph (07) 856 2889

And by the way, a lot of people don't know that Dr. Molan's real job actually involves teaching, supervising graduate students, and working with the dairy industry. Believe it or not, his work on manuka honey is just a side-line interest, and he hasn't received any government research funds to carry out the work. Our whole industry should be thankful for the interest and enthusiasm he has shown toward our main beekeeping product. Good on ya, Peter! Keep up the good work!

MoU NEEDED ON CERTIFICATION

The problems facing the industry over export certification were highlighted in the passing of Remit 13 (Waikato). The remit seeks changes to the proposed export certification procedures for honey products, a draft copy of which has been prepared and circulated to beekeepers by MAF Quality Management.

Many beekeepers see the requirements for conformity certification, especially for those markets requiring AFB freedom in areas surrounding the production area, as both unworkable and overly costly to achieve. While the AFB



HONEY INDUSTRY TRUST FUND

Applications for funding close on 15 August and 15 February. Forms available from the NBA, PO Box 4048, Wellington.

requirement is only stipulated by a handful of generally insignificant honey importing countries (eg. France, Cyprus, Spain), the requirement is also causing concern for exporters of live bees. Canada, our largest market, requires AFB freedom within 8 km of all production apiaries for both queens and package bees.

Just as disconcerting for exporters, however, is the fact that MAF Policy, the real government decision maker in this matter, hasn't provided MAF Quality Management with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for carrying out export certification for either bee products or live bees. MAF Quality Management no longer carries out country-to-country negotiations in relation to export certification. It instead only works under contract to MAF Policy to conduct export certification. MAF Policy sets the standards and specifications for certification, so without MoU's for live bees and bee products, MAF Quality Management does not have authority to certify exports.

The New Zealand Queen Bee Producers Association is urgently seeking clarification of the situation from MAF Policy. At the same time, MAF Quality Management will be seeking a directive from the Director General of Agriculture regarding export certification for the coming season. There is no time to lose, since queen exports are set to get under way again sometime in September.

1080 ACTION ANNOUNCED

With 1080 possum bait poisoning continuing to plague beekeepers (see *Buzzwords* 43), conference once again discussed the 1991 remits on 1080 and possum control. Conference unanimously passed a remit calling for effective action on the problem.

At the same time, Mr. John Bassett of Te Kuiti, mover of the original remits, announced to conference that he was beginning proceedings for a court order to stop 1080 use in the King Country. The Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council recently informed Mr. Bassett and other beekeepers that it would this year carry out poisoning operations not just in the winter period, but from August to February. Mr. Bassett contends that this renders much of the King Country unfit for beekeeping and honey production.

Ted Roberts, the NBA Executive Officer, is set to head a delegation of concerned beekeepers in talks with the Regional Council during the last week of July. According to NBA president Dudley Ward, "this is a serious problem for both parties and we look forward to a reasonable compromise being reached. Possums must be controlled and beekeepers are not opposed to that." What's needed, of course, is for the Animal Health Board to sooner, rather than later, instruct Pest Control Officers to use oxalic acid as a bee repellent in the 1080 baits.

FROM THE BRANCHES

The **Auckland** branch will be holding a seminar/field day on Sunday, August 9, at 24 Andromeda Crescent, East Tamaki (next to Ceracell), beginning with a barbecue lunch at 12 noon. The programme includes Trevor Cullen of Ceracell on wax processing, Dr. Mark Goodwin on adult bee testing for AFB, and Mr. Brian Sherriff (of bee gear fame) with one of his very entertaining talks on international beekeeping. This is a chance for both hobbyist and commercial beekeepers to hear some very interesting and informative speakers, so make sure you attend. The next Auckland branch meeting will be on August 20, at 7.30 pm at the Anglican Church Hall, Coles Crescent, Papakura. Topic will be the conference report.

The **Marlborough** branch will be having a St. Bartholomews (*patron saint of beekeeping - ed.*) and post-conference get together at the Jenkin's residence, Old Renwick Rd., Blenheim, on Saturday, August 22, beginning at 7.30 pm. Bring a plate and some mead (BYOG will do!)

The **Waikato** branch will be holding its post-conference meeting on Friday, August 7, at 10 am, at the Homestead's Green Room, Ruakura Agriculture Centre, Hamilton.

ON THE MOVE

The head office of the National Beekeepers Association has now moved to Walsh Wrightson Tower, 94-96 Dixon Street, Wellington. Their new numbers are 04-385-4229 (phone) and 04-385-8522 (fax). The Post Office box (4048) remains unchanged.

Stephen Ogden, MAF's South Island Apiculture Services Manager, has changed premises at MAF Lincoln. He can now be found across the street in the Animal Health Lab. As from 1 August his new numbers will be:

phone (03) 325-3900
fax (03) 325-3919

The mailing address remains the same - PO Box 24, Lincoln.

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